

# MERRIMACK COLLEGE WRITING CENTER

## A QUICK GUIDE TO ACADEMIC WRITING

There is no one form of academic writing. However, you will always consider the topics presented on this page, making this document a guide for revision and editing activities.

### Writing Process

Process steps are recursive; you don't do them once and forget about them. Instead, do them often and whenever you need.

*Invention:* Activities such as listing, freewriting, brainstorming, clustering / word webs. These help you get started, and can help when you're blocked. There is no wrong way to do this, and grammar doesn't count, so just write!

*Drafting:* The act of writing the essay. Just because the introduction comes first, doesn't mean you have to write it first! You can draft ideas in any order if you want or need to.

*Revision:* The act of managing the Global Issues.

*Editing:* The act of managing the Local Issues.

### Global Issues (Higher Order Concerns)

Global Issues affect the whole overall strength of the work.

*Audience:* Direct and indirect readers. Their knowledge, expectations, and awareness of form will affect your every decision, from argument order to evidence selection to documentation style, tone, and diction (word choice).

*Purpose:* Why are you writing this? What is your message to the reader? What do you want the reader to think, say, or do? How will you establish and maintain your credibility?

*Thesis:* A single statement, usually appearing at the end of the introduction, comprised of three parts: 1) subject, 2) purpose, and 3) opinion. Although still serviceable, the three point thesis / five paragraph theme you may have learned in high school has limited value in a college setting.

*Organization:* The logical pattern of paragraphs. There are nine patterns, usable in combination with each other.

1. Narrative
2. Description: appeal to the senses
3. Comparison & Contrast
  - a. vertical organization is by item
  - b. horizontal is by characteristic
4. Classification: grouping lots of things
5. Division: taking one thing apart
6. Illustration: for example
7. Process
8. Cause & Effect
9. Problem & Solution

All patterns should have internal prioritization (order of importance).

*Development:* The internal workings of academic paragraphs include the following:

1. Claim: topic sentence, stated in your own words
2. Evidence: proof that can take many forms, including visuals, and can be in your own words or someone else's.
3. Discussion: also called metalanguage, that connects evidence to claim to thesis and adjacent paragraphs. This may occur throughout the paragraph.

*Introduction and Conclusion:* Hooks and ideas that lead the reader in and out of your piece of the conversation. These parts work together, and may be written together after writing the body.

### Local Issues (Lower Order Concerns)

Unless they are so extensive that they prohibit comprehension, Local Issues generally only affect a sentence.

1. Grammar: sentence structure, parts of speech
2. Mechanics: capitalization, use of numbers, etc.
3. Spelling
4. Punctuation

